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SUBJECT: NEW ARRESTS IN 2005 SAN JOSE DE APARTADO MASSACRE

REF: 07 BOGOTA 8400

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. On March 14, the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) ordered the capture of 15 members of the Velez Battalion of the Army's 17th Brigade in connection to the February 21, 2005 massacre of eight people, including three children, connected to the San Jose de Apartado peace community. Thirteen of the fifteen are in detention, with one deployed abroad and another (retired) at large. The arrest orders resulted from testimony provided by a former paramilitary in the Justice and Peace Law process. Investigations continue; human rights groups and peace community members noted the positive development but demanded more arrests. The military said they are cooperating fully with Fiscalia's orders. END SUMMARY.

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Thirteen Arrested  
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¶2. The Fiscalia sent a communication to Army Commander General Mario Montoya on March 14 ordering the detention of 15 service members for their connection to the February 21, 2005 La Rebolasa Massacre in San Jose de Apartado in which eight people, including three small children, were killed. The military arrested 13 of those accused. One active duty member is stationed in the Sinai (Egypt), and another is retired. The retired official is currently at large. The 15 members include 3 sub-lieutenants (Alejandro Jaramillo Giraldo, Jorge Humberto Milanés Vega, and Edgar García Estupinan), 4 sergeants (Ángel María Padilla Petro, Henry Guasmayan Ortega, Darío José Brango Agamez, and Oscar Jaime González) and 8 corporals (Sabarain Cruz Reina, Ricardo Bastidas Candia, Hector Londono Ramirez, Luis Gutierrez Echeverri, Jesus David Cardona Casas, Yuber Carranza Rodriguez, Ramon Mican Guativa, and Jose Carmona).

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Justice and Peace Testimony Moves Case  
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¶3. The 15 were implicated in testimony provided by demobilized paramilitary Jorge Luis Salgado David in the Justice and Peace Law process. Salgado went into great detail describing the massacre, including gruesome specifics about other paramilitary members Jose Climaco Falco (alias Cobra) and Joel Jose Vargas Florez participating in the murder of one of the children. On November 22, the Fiscalia ordered the detention of Army Captain Guillermo Gordillo for his participation in the massacre (ref), based in part on the

testimony of another demobilized paramilitary, Andriano Jose Cano Arteaga, who testified that Gordillo had worked with the paramilitaries and patrolled with them various times.

14. The Fiscalía cited the arrests as evidence of its commitment to follow investigations wherever the evidence leads. The military noted its commitment to cooperate with civilian authorities and courts in locating military personnel accused of human rights abuses. The peace community in San Jose de Apartado and human rights groups said the arrests are a step forward and validate the community's claims that the military has targeted them for harassment. Still, they called for further investigation of senior military officers allegedly tied to the crime, as well as officials they believe covered up evidence of military involvement.

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